CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for receiving over a public data network a multicast signal at a user system coupled to the public data network, the method comprising:

determining if a request to receive the mulitcast signal has occurred;

testing a subnetwork for a first multicasting protocol, if a request to receive the mulitcast signal was determined to have occurred;

implementing the first multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is above a criteria;

testing the subnetwork for a subsequent multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is below the criteria;

implementing the subsequent multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is above the criteria;

repeating testing a subnetwork for a subsequent multicasting protocol and implementing the subsequent multicasting protocol, until the result of the test is above the criteria.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the testing tests a subnetwork that does not include the user system.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein if the testing fails to produce a result above the criteria, a default multicast protocol is implemented.

4. An apparatus for receiving at a public data network a multicast singal at a user system (54) coupled to the public data network, the apparatus comprising:

memory (60) for storing a plurality of multicast protocols;

a user interface (58) for allowing a user to request a multicast signal from a source coupled to the public data network; and

a processor (56) for communicating with the public data network, the processor ~~comprising~~.

a determining component for determining if a request for a mulitcast join has occurred;

a testing component for testing a subnetwork for a first multicasting protocol, if it a request for a mulitcast join was determined to have occurred; and

a mulitcast component for implementing the first multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is above a criteria,

wherein the testing component tests the subnetwork for a subsequent multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is below the criteria, the mulitcast component implements the subsequent multicasting protocol, if the result of the test is above a criteria and the processor repeats testing a subnetwork for a subsequent multicasting protocol and implementing the subsequent multicasting protocol, until the result of the test is above the criteria.

5. The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the testing component tests a subnetwork that does not include the user system.

6. The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein if the testing component fails to produce a result above the criteria, a default multicast protocol is implemented.